

## **Domestic Violence Coordinating Council**

### **Children and Domestic Violence Committee Meeting**

**June 1, 2015**

The Children and Domestic Violence Committee met on June 1, 2015 at 10 a.m. at the Department of Services for Children, Youth and their Families in New Castle County. Attending the meeting were Secretary Jennifer Ranji (DSCYF), Tara Andrews (Family Court), Addie Asay (Family Court), Blanche Creech (People's Place), Susanne Miller (Child Inc.), Jasmine Aviles (PBH), Jerrica Boyer (PBH), Maggie Moody (DCADV), Natasha Smith (DVCC Staff).

**Called to Order:** Secretary Ranji called the meeting to order.

**Introductions:** Introductions were made by attendees.

**Minutes from March 16, 2015:** Approved as written.

#### **Old Business**

##### **Family Court Enhancement Project**

Tara Andrews (Family Court) gave an update on the Family Court Enhancement Project (FCEP). She stated that Family Court has partnered with the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) and the Battered Women's Justice Project for technical assistance. There are 2 Subcommittees, the Access to Justice Subcommittee and the Differentiation Subcommittee for this project. Family Court has gathered data from files that include both a PFA order as well as a custody order from across the state. NCJFCJ is currently analyzing the data and should have a preliminary report to Family Court by the end of June 2015. Tara went on to state that the Access to Justice Subcommittee completed walk throughs and site visits for New Castle and Kent Counties. (Members of this Subcommittee participated in going through the PFA process as if they were self-represented litigants in the Family Court system.) The Access to Justice Subcommittee plans to have a report by the end of July 2015 regarding this process. Once preliminary reports are received, the FCEP plans on conducting training to Family Court staff as well as community partners. The Family Court Enhancement Project will be complete in September 2016. Family Court hopes to implement at least some of the recommendations presented in the reports from both Subcommittees before the project ends in September 2016.

##### **Widener University Law School Symposium - Recap**

On April 17, 2015, Widener University Law School held the "Strengthening and Protecting Families Symposium". Those present at the meeting who attended the Symposium agreed that the event was very well attended and was a high quality training. Secretary Ranji asked if Widener's Law Journal published an article on the Symposium. Natasha Smith (DVCC Staff) informed the group that she would follow up with Dana Harrington Conner, Esq. regarding when an article would be published in the Law School Journal.

### Follow Up – Pending Actions Plans from September 24, 2014 Planning Day

*Developing Guides for Frontline Workers* was a pending action item from the Children and Domestic Violence Planning Day held on September 24, 2014. Shirley Roberts (Deputy Director of DFS) will review the Structured Decision Making brochure created when DFS moved to the Structured Decision Making process a few years ago. The hope is to adapt this brochure in order to distribute it to First Responders about DFS.

### Next Steps – Safe and Together Model

Secretary Ranji and Dr. Vicki Kelly had a follow up call with David Mandel a few weeks ago. They discussed bringing David Mandel to meet with Senior Leadership at DFS to discuss what it would take for the Safe & Together Model to be implemented in Delaware. Secretary Ranji discussed having a training day with DFS Senior Leadership, select DFS Supervisors and outside stakeholders to meet with David Mandel regarding the Safe and Together Model. Secretary Ranji believes the morning sessions would involve the larger group but the afternoon sessions would be reserved for DFS Senior Leadership to continue the discussion with David Mandel regarding the Safe and Together Model. Secretary Ranji explained that she would like to have a group of DFS Supervisors trained on the Safe and Together Model to then train and educate DFS staff on the model. Secretary Ranji hopes to have this training in September 2015.

### New Business

#### Definition of a Perpetrator of Domestic Violence and Rebuttable Presumption

Those present at the meeting reviewed Title 13 Chapter 7A from the Delaware Statute. Those present at the meeting discussed what should be included in the definition of a Domestic Violence Perpetrator and what would be affected if the definition changed. It was mentioned that changing the statute may possibly affect those currently on Probation and the frequency of how often they would have to report to their probation officer. Secretary Ranji asked if Dana Harrington Conner, Esq. would be able to come to the next Children & DV meeting as well as provide a list of options/scenarios from her experience working with the definition of a Perpetrator of Domestic Violence. Other things discussed were if someone who has a Lifetime PFA order, someone convicted of terroristic threatening or strangulation would qualify as someone who is a Perpetrator of Domestic Violence. It was also discussed about the possibility of adding language requiring Domestic Violence counseling to be completed at a DVCC Certified Program in the Rebuttable Presumption section of the statute.

Natasha Smith will follow up with Dana Harrington Conner, Esq. regarding attending the next Children & DV Committee as well as providing possible options for changes to the statute. Any draft changes would not be submitted until the 2016 legislative session.

#### CDNDSC Recommendation,

The CDNDSC recommended that the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council's (DVCC) Children and Domestic Violence Committee consider revisiting the discussion about reporting cases of domestic violence involving emotional harm to a child. Specifically, there is concern that reporters will have difficulty identifying either the child's diagnosed mental health condition or behaviors that signify severe psychological harm in these cases. Secretary Ranji will talk with Dr. Vicki Kelly about the structured

decision making process and domestic violence cases. There may be a possibility of tying this issue into the Safe & Together model.

#### Committee Goals & Focus

Natasha Smith (DVCC Staff) discussed the updates to the DVCC website and adding a statement and additional items to the Children & Domestic Violence Committee website. Natasha Smith will send out a draft of the Committee statement for Comments to the Children & DV Committee.

Next Meeting Date: To Be Determined